

# SOCIAL ACTION

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APRIL 15, 1946

What Future for Men with Hoes?  
*Answers by Arthur Raper, Paul Sifton  
and David Burgess*

# SOCIAL ACTION Magazine

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LISTON POPE, *Editor*

KENNETH UNDERWOOD, *Mg. Editor*

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# What Future for Men with Hoes?

*Social Action's* rural life issues have always been the most bitterly attacked of all the subjects dealt with by the magazine. "What Future for Men with Hoes?" will be, we predict, among the most unpopular and most prophetic of them, for it is written by three informed and outspoken writers who have made the cause of the rural oppressed their own.

Dr. Arthur Raper is perhaps the nation's foremost authority on the subject assigned him: the fate of the family-sized, home-owned farm in America. Dr. Raper is co-author of *Sharecroppers All*. He is at present a member of the staff of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics in the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Paul Sifton is the former director of the Washington Bureau of the Union for Democratic Action, and hence writes on "Power Politics in Agriculture" from personal observation as well as an excellent theoretical background.

Rev. David S. Burgess, whose article on "The Church and Rural Justice" suggests a guide to action and the tenets of a social faith, is a minister working among the residents of the Delmo Labor Homes in southeast Missouri. As Congregational Christian chaplain to the National Farm Labor Union (formerly the Southern Tenant Farmers Union), Mr. Burgess aided the Delmo families in a successful fight to keep their nine community projects from being liquidated during a recent congressional drive against the Farm Security Administration program. Mr. Burgess served as consulting editor of this issue and is in great part responsible for its organization and orientation.

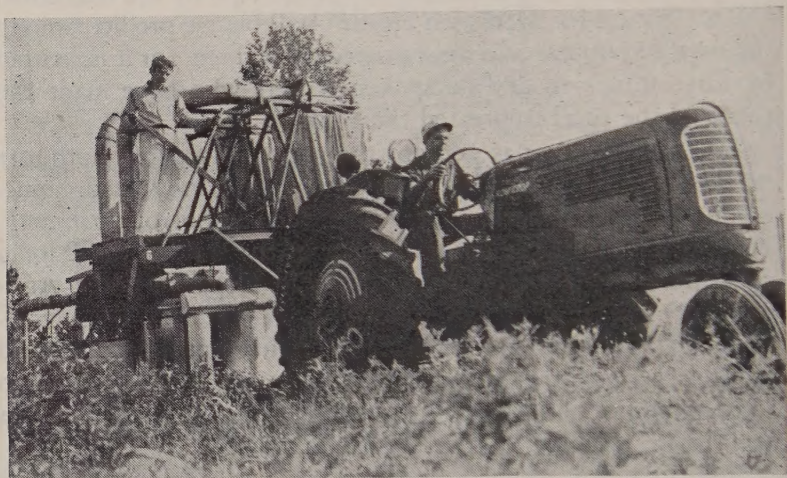
The directory of farm organizations — general, religious, union, etc.—at the end of the issue has been prepared by Robert B. Sanford, a divinity school student preparing for life-time service in the rural ministry.

Thus the authors of this issue represent the best of a new type of leadership in America, which offers something more than the planless chaos now confronting the dwellers in our country slums.

KENNETH UNDERWOOD

# Future of the Family-Sized Farm

by ARTHUR RAPER



—Acme

The Rust mechanical cotton picker, which would displace more workers than almost any other farm machine, is a symbol of the increasing mechanization of rural America. The trend toward large-scale farming in practically all parts of our country makes imperative a reconsideration of the future of the family-sized, home-owned farm.

Throughout our nation's history it has been assumed that agriculture prospers and democratic institutions flourish when the land is owned in family-sized units by those who till it. Practically all national leaders in their public utterances do homage to the home-owned farm. They speak of it as the best type of farm to produce food and fiber, to conserve the land, to have good rural communities, and the best place for children to grow up.

## *Promotion of Home Ownership of Farms*

The long-time, widespread appreciation of the home-owned farm has not been just talk. Numerous things have been done to promote it, many of them of a very concrete nature. The value that the people of this nation have put on the ownership of the land by the farm families themselves constitutes one



of the brightest pages in our history. That was the thinking of Thomas Jefferson and his followers when they pointed to the farm owners as the backbone of the young democracy. That was the thinking of Congress in 1841 when the Preemption Act was passed, and again in the early 1860's when the Homestead Laws were enacted to facilitate the settlement of the West in family-sized farm units. That was the thinking which caused the Federal Government to retain title to that fifth of the nation's land consisting of rugged forests, range lands, and arid areas not readily susceptible to subdivision into family-sized farming operations. That was the thinking back of the creation of the Bureau of Reclamation in 1902, which has prepared around four and one-half million acres of irrigable farm land for cultivation, nearly all of which was initially occupied by family-sized operators under the Bureau's 160-acre water-right limitation. That was the thinking that established the Federal Land Bank in 1916, which has made four and one-half billion dollars available in loans at low interest to farm families who wanted to buy land, improve their farms, or refinance burdensome mortgages. This same concern for the ownership of family-sized farms by those who till them prompted the enactment by Congress in 1937 of the Bankhead-Jones Tenant Purchase legislation, which has enabled approximately 40,000 farm tenants to purchase farms of their own. Homestead tax exemptions in 15 or more states also promote home-ownership of farms.

Other general legislation and public policies clearly related to the promotion of the home-owned farm include the early establishment of roads free to the public, with the emphasis in recent years upon Federal support for farm-to-market roads; the creation and maintenance of the public school system, especially the donation by the Government of public lands in the later-settled areas to support the common schools and to provide for the teaching of agriculture and related subjects in land-grant colleges; and the enactment of the legislation providing for the rural free delivery mail service, and eventually

parcel post. Since the early 1930's the Production Credit Associations and related Governmental services have made short-term low-interest loans to farmers totaling almost five and one-half billion dollars. The Farm Security Administration through its debt reduction service has brought relief to thousands of farmers with burdensome debt, and has made one or more low-interest supervised loans to 1,107,800 farmers. The Rural Electrification Administration has already brought electrical current to over 1,050,000 farm homes. The Agricultural Extension Service, the Soil Conservation Service, and numerous Federal and State agencies continuously demonstrate by their programs that they put a high value on the family-sized, home-owned farm. Much has been done over the years to safeguard the ownership of the land to those who live on it. Even so, farm ownership has declined.

### *The Increase of Farm Tenancy*

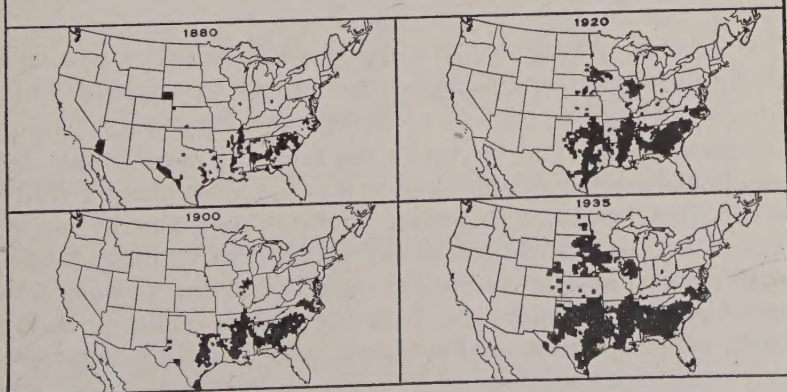
While we as a people have done a number of concrete things to bolster family-sized farm ownership, and have generally paid lip service to that as an ideal, it has been increasingly difficult for families to own the land they cultivate. The result is that the proportion of farm families who own the land they work has declined from 74 per cent in 1880 (the first Census that reported the tenure of farm operators) to 61 per cent in 1940. With the exception of New England and a few Middle Atlantic states, which have the lowest tenancy rates in the nation, all parts of the country showed marked increases in tenancy during the period. The South, with 36 per cent tenancy in 1880, the highest of any region, stood at 48 per cent in 1940, still the nation's highest. The greatest relative increase in farm tenancy, however, occurred in those potent West North Central agricultural states of Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, the Dakotas, Nebraska and Kansas, where tenancy rates rose from 20 per cent to 42 per cent during the 60-year period while the increase in the western states was from 14 per cent to 20 per cent. The farm tenancy rates for the nation as a whole and for each



region were higher in 1930 and 1935 than in 1940. The reduction of the rates since 1930 has not been due to an increase of farm owners but rather to the decline of many sharecropper and tenant families into the day labor group, where they are no longer listed as farmers.

The growth of farm tenancy since 1880 will be best seen in the maps below. They show in black, at successive periods, the counties where more than half of the farm families do not own the land they cultivate. Note how the black area in the Southeast expands in all directions as you look from one map to the next; how the Mississippi Delta gets solid black and a little larger; how the scattered black areas in Texas in 1880 expand by 1935 into a great horseshoe, covering east and west Texas and nearly all of Oklahoma, though by 1940 tenancy decreased in west Texas and Oklahoma because cotton farming began to be mechanized; how a spot no bigger than a pin point in central Illinois in 1880 expands from one map to the next; and how the black areas of Iowa that appear first in the 1920 map have by 1940 engulfed about half of that great agricultural state along with most of the eastern half of South

COUNTIES IN WHICH AT LEAST HALF OF THE FARMS WERE OPERATED BY  
TENANTS AND CROPPERS



Dakota, much of eastern Nebraska and the southwest counties of Minnesota. Scattered black counties, it will be noted on the 1935 map, occur in eastern Colorado, central Kansas, North Dakota, central Ohio, the blue grass area of Kentucky, and the eastern shore of Maryland. By 1940, some counties in Iowa and Minnesota had lightened up, while more counties became black in North Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Colorado.

An even more marked increase is evident when we consider the counties in which at least half of the land in farms is under lease to the operators. (See maps, page nine.) In 1910, there were 403 such counties; in 1935, over 1,100. The six rather small concentrations of counties in 1910 all became larger during the 25-year period with the greatest expansion occurring in the heart of the Corn Belt and in the Northern Wheat Belt.

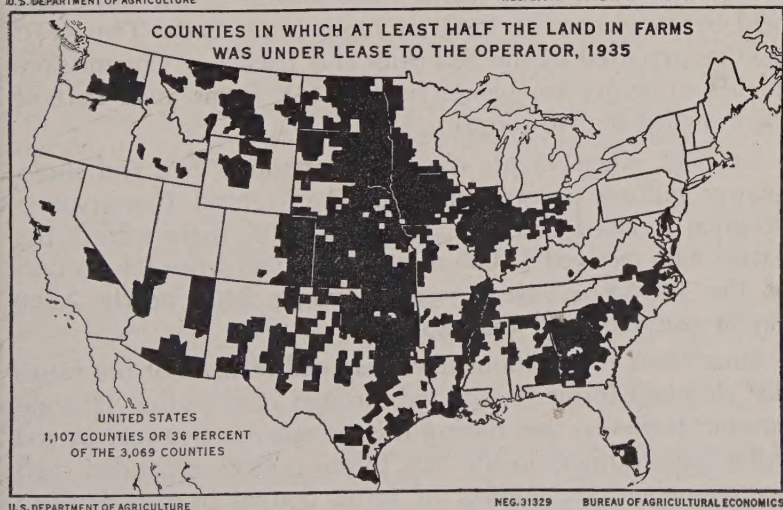
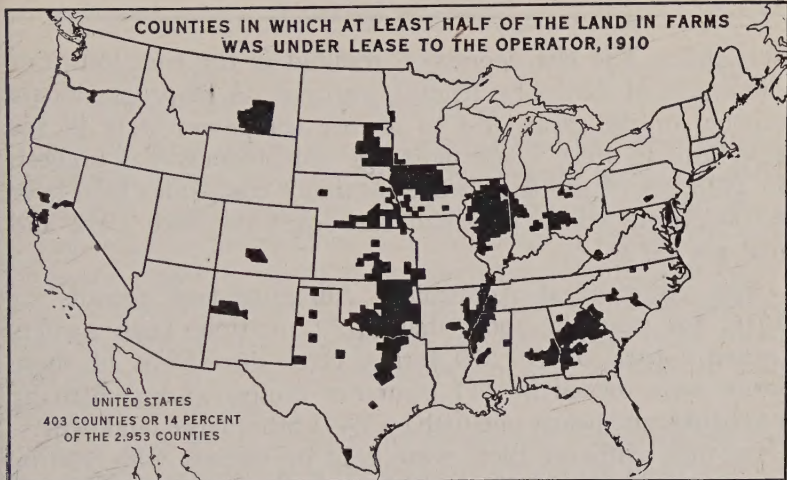
In 1940, the average value of land and buildings per farm was universally lower for tenants than for owners only in the Southern States, where the average value of farms is the lowest in the Nation. For most of the more prosperous Northern and Western States, the average value of the farms operated by tenants was higher than that of those operated by owners.

### ***Decrease of the Farmer's Equity in His Farm***

The equity of farm operators in the total value of the land and buildings of their farms decreased from 56 per cent in 1890 (when first shown by the Census) to 43 per cent in 1940. This decrease was caused in part by the increase of tenancy during this period, and in part by the general upward trend in the ratio of debt to value of owner-operator farms.

Generally speaking, the better the farm the more certain it is to be mortgaged, and the poorer it is the more likely it is to be debt free. Lending agencies are careful of their security when they make loans, and furthermore they prefer to make large loans rather than small ones. The result is that the farm owners in the poorest farming areas have the highest equity in their farms, while those in the best farming areas have the lowest proportionate equity.





### *Concentrated Big Farming Operations*

The really important measure of the status of the family-sized, home-owned farm in this country is to be had from the extent to which the *best lands* are operated by home-owning operators who are either debt-free or have only easily manage-

able debts. The last depression resulted in the foreclosure of thousands of farms by lending agencies. A disproportionate number of the farms lost to finance companies were in the best farming areas where mortgage indebtedness was highest. In 1938, six of the largest life insurance companies held over 60,000 farms which they had foreclosed on since 1932 and had not yet sold.

The Agricultural Adjustment Administration records of 1936, for example, show that 3,772 multiple farm owners owned a total of 107,579 farms. Over three-fifths of these farms were owned by 111 insurance companies, one-fifth by 170 banks, and nearly one-fifth by 3,491 other large landowners. Over nine-tenths of them were held by owners with 100 or more farms each, while nearly three-fourths of the total were held by 25 owners of 1,000 or more farms each. Two years later, as reported by the Securities and Exchange Commission, 21 life insurance companies held 57,638 farms, over half of them owned by five companies.

In 1939, when 92 per cent of the nation's five and three-quarter million payees under the Agricultural Conservation Program received checks of less than \$200, there were 2,108 payees who received \$3,000 or more. In 1944 when 94 per cent of the 3,846,816 payees received under \$200 nearly 2,500 payees received more than \$3,000.\*

Since 1940, corporations have disposed of most of the farms that they had formerly acquired through foreclosures. It is important, however, that during this prosperous five-year period many large farmers in the best farming areas expanded their operations and the number of farms bought by city dwellers with surplus money increased greatly. The purchase of farm property by non-farmers has come to be big business in many areas. In the Far West the swank rural places of the wealthy urbanites are known as "dude ranches," while in the older and

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\*These figures are compiled by states where payments were earned, and therefore reflect less concentration than really exists, since a number of the largest owners of land have large acreages in a number of states.



more prosaic East they are variously called "rural estates," "play farms," and "country show places."

The decrease since 1940 of farms owned by life insurance companies, banks, and other lending agencies must be looked upon as a phenomenon of farm prosperity rather than as a permanent trend away from such ownership of farms. The role of lending agencies tends to become more important as farming operations become more commercialized and more specialized, and therefore these lending agencies in the years ahead may exercise an even greater influence upon agriculture than they have in the past.

If we look at the number and production importance of the big farming operations in the country, we get yet a further idea of how far much of the nation's agriculture is from the much praised, family-sized, home-owned farm. As early as 1929, 15 per cent of all products were produced by 1.4 per cent of the farms. The figures for 1939 showed a yet greater concentration, 17 per cent of the total production being from a little less than 1 per cent of all farms.

Broadly speaking, greater concentrations of big farm operations occur in the South and West\* than in the North and East.

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\*By way of illustration, in Imperial Valley, one of California's most famous vegetable and melon producing areas, 36 per cent of the landowners are non-resident individuals and five and one-half per cent of them are corporations, mostly non-resident. Most of the largest farming enterprises in the valley are on the properties of these non-resident owners and of the corporations. Here occurs the greatest specialization in farming operations; here, too, production costs are often lowest and profits highest. The family-sized farmer can make a living here, but the big grower-shippers are the operators who can take full advantage of farm machinery, of soil and crop experts, of seasonal labor, and of the markets across the continent.

In the North Central States, due to increasing mechanization the number of farm families decreased by nearly 90,000 since 1940 despite a gain of over 10,000,000 acres in farmlands in this area during the five-year period.

What will increasing mechanization of farming mean to the cotton South, long characterized by the least mechanized and smallest farms in the nation? The mechanical cotton picker, now successful in field tests, displaces more workers than almost any other farm machine, except the cane harvester which will also be used in the lower South. The next decade may record greater changes in the size of farming operations in some parts of the southern states than in any other part of the country in any one decade in the nation's history.

Also greater concentrations occur in the production of sugar cane, rice, vegetables and fruits, cattle and sheep, wheat and cotton, than for corn, hogs, poultry and dairy products, berries and tobacco.

The trend toward large-scale farming continues in practically all parts of the country, particularly now that resident farm families are expanding their operations, money-laden urban dwellers are buying up farms and developing them, and corporations producing specialized agricultural products are finding their activities more and more remunerative.

### ***The Waning Importance of Land Ownership***

This emphasis on large production and greater specialization will likely lead the farming enterprise farther and farther away from the family-sized, home-owned farm. In the Connecticut Valley the landowner contracts with the tobacco and onion packers and handlers to grow certain amounts of these crops under stipulated conditions and to sell to the handlers. In such an arrangement the owner becomes a tenant producer. Sugar beets, sugar cane, and other crops are often grown under similar arrangements. The truth is that the owner of the land in some of the newest and most highly specialized agricultural areas already occupies a distinctly second place to the grower-shipper who specializes in financing the production and marketing of fresh or canned fruits and vegetables in car-load lots. Production and marketing are the most important considerations. The land itself is only a means to *the* end.

This development is most marked in the newer western irrigated areas. In Imperial Valley and the upper reaches of the San Joaquin Valley, large operators concentrate on a single farm product and shift their operations from one tract of land to another to utilize the fields that are ready for their particular crop as dictated by the established crop rotation system of the locality. Specialized production thus becomes the basis of farming operation, rather than the ownership of any particular tract of land.



The further expansion of commercialized farming in such areas results in greater specialization, more rotation of farm operators, the enlargement of farming units, and the decline of organized rural life as erstwhile resident operators move off the land. This is a far cry from the family-sized, home-owned farm where children can grow up in a working partnership with their parents, where the soil can be best protected because of the proprietary interest in it of the man who works it, and where long-time resident families maintain community activities of which they are justly proud.

Beginnings of this emphasis on production and marketing rather than on the ownership of the land are to be seen in most of the more prosperous farming areas of the country. That's what lies back of the increase of farm tenancy in the Corn and Wheat Belts, the decrease of the equity of owner-operators in their farms, the greater reliance the farmers are putting upon machinery, production finance, expert management, seasonal labor and the other means of production. As the commercialization of farming has expanded, the relative value put upon the ownership of the land itself has waned.

### *Corporation Farms or Cooperating Farmers—Which?*

The housewives of the nation want their vegetables fresh, and in standardized packages; so, too, their fruits and nuts. They like best the canned goods bearing familiar trade-names. The meat market is most popular that has standardized cuts the year 'round. Such are the pressures at the buying end that stimulate the mass production of agricultural products. They can be produced in mass, broadly speaking, by two methods: 1) through the integrated cooperative efforts of numerous producers, or 2) through the activities of large-scale individual farmers or corporations. The former way can be achieved only through a greater degree of understanding and desire to work together among small and medium-sized farmers than has ever occurred in most parts of this country;\* the latter way of satis-

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\*In a few areas, however, particularly in the newer part of the Middle West and

fyng the consuming public leads to the further decline of the home-owned farm, and in many areas to an increase of farm tenancy or migrant agricultural workers.

If the purchasers of farm products—the great American public—would take the trouble to acquaint themselves with the farm situation, they would realize that they occupy two key positions in the situation. They are buyers and voters. Therefore they can do much to determine whether the farm products of the future will be grown by great impersonal corporation farms where the work is done by landless and often migrant families, or whether the family-sized, home-owned farm is to survive as a dominant factor in the nation's agriculture.

By giving preference in their buying to the products of genuine farm cooperatives, the purchasers of the nation can help the farmers who market their products through them to expand their cooperative enterprises to include more farmers and to put on the market a greater range and volume of standardized products. The general public can help secure legislation and maintain services such as the following that protect the family-sized, home-owned farm: low interest on long-time

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in the Northern Plains States where large proportions of the farm people came from Scandinavian countries, the farmers now have well-established cooperatives for the purchase of farm supplies and for the sale of some of their farm products. Consumer and marketing cooperatives among farmers are of some importance, too, in New England and the Middle Atlantic States. The cooperatives are expanding slowly in these Eastern areas and in some sections now include a majority of the farmers. In more recent years consumer cooperatives have become of real importance as far South as Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina and Kentucky. Some small but hopeful beginnings are being made in the cooperative marketing of selected farm products such as eggs, broilers, and turkeys.

In the South, there has long been some cooperative marketing of cotton, tobacco, and peanuts, but cooperatives in this area have seldom sold the major portion of any one crop for any length of time. Nor have they been of much, if any, benefit to the great majority of poor farmers of this region who, as dependent tenants and marginal landowners, commonly produce their crops with borrowed money and so have little or no direct control over their marketable produce at the end of the year.

The Pacific Coast area, southern Arizona, the Rio Grande valley, the Gulf Coast semi-tropical fringe and the peninsula of Florida have rather widespread centralized arrangements for the mass marketing of vegetables and melons, citrus and other fresh fruits. Many of these marketing organizations are cooperatives. The largest grower-shippers often exercise a great influence in their operations.



loans with which to buy farms and develop cooperative activities; low interest on short-time loans with which to produce crops and develop livestock enterprises; the provision of adequate public education and health facilities in rural areas where the local taxable wealth is relatively low; the further expansion of the teaching of vocational agriculture in rural high schools; the extension of rural electrification; the establishment of tax policies that give the resident home-owning farm families an incentive to own their farms and cooperate with their neighbors in the production of standardized farm products.

It is something of a bother in many parts of the country to buy farm products marketed through cooperatives, and it is no simple matter to know how to promote the ownership of small farms through the use of the franchise. Difficult as they may be, these things must be done if the long-time trend toward increased tenancy and corporation farming is to be checked.

### *Other Obstacles to Home-Owned Farms*

There are other obstacles to the family-sized farm that must be overcome:

1. *First is the long-time imbalance between urban and rural economy*, which got established on a general basis in the decade following the end of the Civil War, though its roots clearly go back to Alexander Hamilton's time when tariffs were set up to protect infant industries. Throughout the years, the farmer has not been able to get a high enough price for what he has sold as compared to the price he had to pay for the things he bought. The result has been that the wealth of the country has piled up in the cities.

2. This imbalance between urban and rural economy has been the underlying cause of many *foreclosures of farms by life insurance companies, banks, and other urban money lending agencies* in depression periods. The urban community's surplus money has doubly handicapped the home ownership of family-sized farms. In prosperous times this urban money is invested in farms and country show places, thus upping the price of farms farther above their earning capacity than the farmers themselves would raise them. In hard times urban mortgage holders have taken over farm lands at figures below their long-time earning power. The practical result is that farm ownership comes to be looked upon by

more and more of the farmers themselves as a very difficult goal to achieve.

3. Another factor undermining the stability of farm ownership has been the *recurring periods of economic prosperity and depression* that have characterized our national life. Most foreclosures occur during the periods of low prices for farm products. The number of foreclosures in periods of low prices is accentuated by the prosperous periods that usually precede them. It has been during peak prices that numerous non-owning families have first accumulated enough money to move toward ownership by making a down payment on land, bargained for at inflated prices and often lost to creditors when land values have dropped back to a sale price near or even below the amount the prospective purchaser still owed on the land. The result is not only a farm foreclosed, or voluntarily forfeited to creditors, but the savings of a family wiped out through an unsuccessful attempt to become a landowner. When such an experience is lived through by a middle-aged farmer who saw his father lose his farm in some earlier depression, there begins to develop within such a family the philosophy that it's more sensible to remain tenants, or sharecroppers, or wage-hands, than to try the impossible. And let no one mistake the fact that with farm tenancy increasing from 25 per cent in 1880 to 39 per cent in 1940, a considerable proportion of farmers without land in this country have had precisely that experience.

4. A further hazard to farm ownership has been the custom of *equal annual payments* on the purchase price of a farm. This means that if two or three or more bad years come in succession it is very difficult for new purchasers, and often even for those with most of their mortgage paid, to meet their obligations. Also, most *purchasers attempt to pay for their farms in too short a time*. Variable payments over a longer period of time as worked out by the Farm Security Administration for its farm ownership clients are more in keeping with a sound plan to increase farm ownership.

5. Another hindrance to farm ownership has been *the high cost of production credit*, particularly in the Southern states where farm tenancy rates are highest. Most farmers produce their cotton with borrowed money, on much of which is paid an interest rate of 20 to 50 per cent *per annum*. Had it not been for the production loans in recent years of the Production Credit Association, and of the Farm Security Administration, the farm ownership picture would be worse than it is now.



6. *New farm machinery*, often accompanied as it is by *greater specialization*, has nearly always resulted either in an increased proportion of the farm work being done by hired workers as on the West Coast, or in an increase in the size of the farm unit and therefore a decrease in the number of farms as in the Midwest and in the Plains States. Cotton plantation farming antedates the development of modern farm machinery, but it got underway only after the invention of the cotton gin and spinning machinery; and in the near future, cotton production will likely undergo tremendous changes in response to multiple-row planters, flame throwers, and mechanical pickers.

7. Another drawback to farm ownership lies in the fact that *most small farmers (owners and tenants) look upon themselves primarily as employers* rather than as either workers or consumers. The reason for this seems to be a combination of things. They hire a little labor each year—sometimes more than they can afford—and at rather low wages. Many of them would like to be larger operators and therefore put special value upon the few times during the year that they operate in the cherished role of employer. The low incomes of the hired families retard the home ownership of farms, first by limiting the savings that working families can accumulate to buy farms with, and second by giving the economic advantage to those highly commercial farms that can produce crops cheapest through specialization, the use of farm machinery, and reliance upon seasonal labor. If the small farmer could see himself as primarily either a worker or consumer—and he is in reality both—he could be a great force in increasing the number of farm owners.

8. A further hindrance to farm ownership is that *the owners of family-sized farms have no unity among themselves*. The relatively prosperous commercial farm owners of the North and West have little knowledge or concern about conditions among the less prosperous subsistence farm owners of the South. The public measures desired by one group are seldom favored by the other.

9. The most recent developments hindering the increase of farm ownership have been *the marked rise in the price of land*, and *the larger capital investment* in machinery and equipment needed for successful farming operations. The total effect of the prosperous war period upon farm ownership is not yet clear, for although there has been some increase in the number of home-owned farms in some areas, there was a decrease of around 90,000 farms in the country as a whole in the five-year period ending in 1945, according to preliminary Census reports, with the greatest losses occur-

ring in the most prosperous farming areas such as the Midwest and the Northern Plains. It will be interesting to determine later what effects if any the whole price control policy during the war period has had upon farm ownership, especially such matters as the use of ceiling prices on farm products, the setting of agricultural wages for some crops, and the use on farms of imported workers and prisoners of war.

### ***Do We Really Want Home-Owned Farms?***

If we prefer home-owned farms, in general, it is high time an appraisal of the whole farm situation were made by the general public, and that the people of this country go forward with those things that safeguard farm ownership and leave off those things that would further harm it. But, do we really want farm ownership enough to have it in those areas where the land is most productive? The price of farm ownership is rather high from some points of view. Yet any other type of agriculture may be too costly for us if we value the opportunity to demonstrate to ourselves and to the rest of the world that democracy in our national agricultural enterprise is practicable. To be feasible, however, the family-sized home-owned farm will need to conserve and restore the highly abused soil better than any other type of farm, and it will need to maintain a larger rural population at a higher level of living and produce as much or more high quality food and fiber.

Generally speaking, farm owners take better care of the land than tenants or other lessors, and are likely to have more interest in their farm homes and in the local community. They have a stake in the land as such, and know they will benefit by any improvements they make on it. Many but not all tenants tend to get as much as they can out of the land each year since they seldom have a proprietary interest in it, and often have no assurance of more than a year or two's stay on a particular farm. There are exceptions, of course, for many tenants live on the same farms decade in and out and take a real interest in soil conservation and in community affairs.

Many a widely traveled man is positive he can pick out most of the owner's homes, not by the size of the house or the barn or the amount of farm machinery, but by the upkeep of the farm dwelling and its surroundings—the paint on the house, the fixtures at the windows, the flowers and shrubs around it, the conditions of the fences and gates, and the erectness with which the mailbox stands by the road. Outside the South, tenant farmers often have larger acreages and more machinery than owners, but in all sections of the country fewer tenants than owners have telephones, electric lights, running water and other home conveniences. The general level of living of the farm population seems to be better safeguarded by the home-owned farm than by any other, including the maintenance of schools, churches, and community activities in which the people participate and of which they are proud.

The development of big commercial farms may reduce the immediate cash costs of production—and even reduce the price to the consumer—by the use of seasonal workers, but those savings may be more than offset by other considerations such as the poor and over-crowded housing conditions of most seasonal workers, the irregular schooling their children receive, and the paucity of stable community institutions and group activities. Seasonal workers are a floating population. Could it be that they may cost the nation within any quarter-century more money than their employers and the consuming public ever save by their being on hand in the busy season to harvest the crops at prevailing wages?

Men, women, and children are human beings, and from a social viewpoint that agricultural system is best which affords the largest number of them the greatest opportunity to live well while producing the field crops and livestock products the world needs. The home-owned farm in the short run may not be the cheapest way to produce farm products, but it does seem in the long run to be socially the best way to produce them and to maintain good rural communities.



# Power Politics in Agriculture

by PAUL SIFTON



—Hust Studio

**In Yuba County, California, migrant peach pickers meet to discuss ways of organizing so that their voices can be heard amid the clamor of the pressure lobbies of the well-to-do farmers.**

For the purpose of describing and measuring the play of power politics in American agriculture, it may be said that twelve men shape the nation's farm policies. All of these individuals are well intentioned, according to their lights.

Behind some of these men are organizations and influences running far from the country's farms. These ties reach to commodity markets, to food processing, distributing and marketing interests, to the American Farm Bureau, Grange, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Manufacturers, American Bankers Association and even the American Medical Association. The twelve men and the members of the organizations they represent display more interest in farm policies than do the mass of farm people themselves. Therein lies much of the trouble and danger. All twelve carry the banner for family-type farming, but how much they actually

contribute toward the maintenance of this institution is often open to question.

### *The Twelve Men of Agriculture*

Below are listed the powerful Twelve who make the major economic, social and political decisions for 20,000,000 people living on 6,000,000 farms in America.

#### IN CONGRESS:

*Malcolm C. Tarver*—(D. Ga.) Chairman, House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

*John H. Bankhead II*—(D. Ala.) Second ranking majority member, Senate Agriculture and Forestry Committee; member, Committee on Appropriations

*Richard D. Russell*—(D. Ga.) Chairman, Senate Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee; member, Agriculture and Forestry Committee.

*Everett M. Dirksen*—(R. Ill.) Ranking minority member, House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

*H. Carl Anderson*—(R. Minn.) Second ranking minority member, House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee.

*John Taber*—(R. N.Y.) Ranking minority member, House Appropriations Committee.

#### IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT:

*Ivy W. Duggan*—Chief, Farm Credit Administration, with headquarters in Kansas City, Mo.

*Robert H. Shields*—Solicitor, Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

#### FARM ORGANIZATIONS:

*Charles W. Holman*—Secretary, National Cooperative Milk Producers Federation; Founder, National Council of Farm Cooperatives. Associated with the Industrial Workers of the World as a young man, Holman has long been content to protect the markets for the products of the farmers who are members of cooperatives in his Federation from competition both foreign and domestic. The big milk companies, who under marketing agreements pay cooperatives on a varying two-level price schedule (base and surplus), seem likewise content. Their profits exceed the farmers'.

*Earl C. Smith*—The American Farm Bureau Federation's one man brain trust and former Vice President; Chairman of its Resolutions Committee; President of the thriving Illinois Agricultural Association. Smith is a Republican. If a Republican president takes office in 1949, Smith is expected to get the A.F.B.F. presidency, now occupied by the jovial but aging Edward Asbury O'Neal III, an Alabama Democrat. Thus the corn-cotton-dairy axis will, barring an economic crisis in agriculture, continue to pull the nation's farm policy to the right.

*Edward Asbury O'Neal III*—President, American Farm Bureau Federation, which has approximately one million members, mostly in the following belts: midwest corn-hog, southern cotton, and southwest and Pacific coast citrus and vegetable. Commander of the \$60,000,000 U.S. State and County Extension Service (County Agent system) which recruits and services A.F.B.F. members, spreads A.F.B.F. propaganda and mobilizes A.F.B.F. pressure on Congress and administrative agencies.

*Albert S. Goss*—Master of the National Grange, the oldest farm organization, now sadly gone to seed. Membership of more than 500,000 in northeast, middle, northwest and Pacific coast states. It drives horse and buggy mentality furiously, trying to keep up with the A.F.B.F. bulldozer and to deflect it from pushing family-type farming out on the highways.

The Big Six in Congress, although sensitive to the pressures of the Big Four of the farm organizations and their collaboration with industry, business, utilities, finance and organized medicine, slow down the sweep toward industrialized agriculture. They plug for family-type farming, partly because they are sincerely attached to that ideal, partly because it is still good politics.

The two powerful men in the Department of Agriculture, Duggan and Shields, are the cushions, mediators and, on occasion, cagey manipulators between the farm organization coalitions and the Big Six in Congress. Duggan's power resides in his control of the credit pipe lines and the careful balancing of his advisory boards; Shields controls the interpretation of farm statutes and appropriation items even to their smallest phases. As Solicitor, Shields has made himself the *de facto* boss of the Department of Agriculture.



### *The Thirteenth Man*

A thirteenth man is on the outside looking in, pounding at the doors where decisions are made, trying to influence policies and operations in the direction of the ideal of family-type farming to which the Twelve give lip service, trying to inform public opinion about the crisis in agriculture, trying to awaken farmers themselves to that crisis and to mobilize them in time. This man is James G. Patton, of Denver, Colorado, President of the National Farmers Union. The N.F.U. has about 400,000 members, mostly in the high plains grain states, the New Jersey poultry area, the New York milk shed and the Oregon fruit district.

Farther away, their voices hardly heard, are two spokesmen for the landless farm people, the hired hands, tenants, sharecroppers and migrants. H. L. Mitchell of Memphis, Tenn., is President of the National Farm Labor Union, formerly the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, claiming 27,000 members in the southern states. Don Henderson, President of the Food, Tobacco and Allied Workers Union—C.I.O.—has had a checkered and unhappy career, trying to adapt the policies of his organization to the swerves, dips and corkscrew turns of the Communist Party line. This was the cause for the break between these two organizations in 1939. During the war, Mitchell's organization furnished badly needed farm labor to the big industrialized farms in the northeast and on the Pacific coast. He gave what leadership he could to the pitiful efforts by southern cotton pickers to get decent wages for their work.

### *How Congress and Pressure Groups Work*

Little attention need be paid here to the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture. Neither committee, as a committee, is effective in forming or revising farm policies. Individuals on the committees have been powerful, however. Senator John Bankhead and Representative Harold D. Cooley of North Carolina and special subcommittees, such as the Cooley Committee that investigated F.S.A. and broke its back in 1944,

have been effective. Representative Stephen Pace of Georgia has put through the House an amendment which would add the cost of hired and family labor to the farm price parity formula. Pace can also claim credit for the amendment to the 1944 farm labor appropriation bill forbidding the use of labor standards, except for aliens as required under international agreement.

Both House and Senate agricultural committees have lost their authority over farm policy to the appropriations subcommittees handling the agriculture budget of about one billion dollars, year in and year out. This is particularly true of the House Agriculture Appropriations Subcommittee, under the chairmanship of the industrious and conscientious Representative Malcolm C. Tarver, of Dalton, Georgia. Tarver is proud of the fact that his committee conducts its hearings and makes its recommendations on a non-partisan basis. That it does do. The harmony among Tarver and James Whitten of the cotton South and Dirksen and Andersen of the grain, livestock and dairy North is something to behold. It is evident both in closed committee hearings, when witnesses are being examined, and on the floor, when Southern Democrat and Northern Republican members of the powerful subcommittee stand shoulder to shoulder, beating down floor amendments, and driving through the bill as reported.

Lasting from January through March, the hearings on the 1947 Agriculture budget, conducted by the Tarver Committee, form a book of 2039 pages, weighing four pounds. As in previous years, past and present policies of the Department of Agriculture were examined, sparingly praised or denounced in extreme terms. The power of the purse is exercised to the full. In approving, decreasing or increasing funds, Tarver's subcommittee literally rewrites the nation's farm policy from year to year. The budget and policies submitted by the Department of Agriculture are little more than the best guesses the apprehensive employees can make as to what Tarver and his fellow members will smile upon or tolerate.

### ***Who Makes Farm Policy?***

As to policy-formation, Tarver is careful to stipulate that the making of new policy is the function, not of his committee, but of the Agriculture Committee. It is probably true that, if the Agriculture Committee were as capable as Tarver's subcommittee, it would be able to perform that function. Since it obviously is not, Tarver and his co-workers fill the vacuum in an indirect, piece-meal and negative way.

The Secretary of Agriculture and his bureau and division chiefs are cross-examined on past performance and future plans and also upon their innermost convictions and theories. For example, in the hearings on the 1946-7 budget, Howard A. Tolley, Chief of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, was grilled for three days by Tarver, Whitten and other members of the subcommittee because:

(1) The B.A.E. had formulated a proposal for the domestic and foreign sale of American farm products at the world price. Any difference between the yield and the amount necessary to provide the farmer a fair income was to be made up by Government payments of some sort.

(2) A B.A.E. employee had written a memo reporting on social conditions in Cohoama County, Mississippi, mentioning "the race question," as Representative Whitten described it. Only 35 copies of this study were dittoed, only 16 distributed—nine within the Department, three to Mississippi Congressmen and four outside the Department for review and criticism.

Both Democratic and Republican members jumped on Tolley for the world price proposal, but were careful not to risk a statement of an alternative solution for postwar farm "surpluses."

Under severe cross-examination by Tarver, Secretary Anderson denied he was committed to the first proposal. He cited his statement to the American Farm Bureau Federation proposing revision of the price parity idea in the next three years. Then, significantly, he bowed low to the realities of power politics in agriculture by saying that proposals for future legislation should "be coming from the farmers themselves and



from the farm organizations, the Grange, the Farm Bureau Federation, the Farmers Union, the National Council of Farm Cooperatives and various groups of that kind." Against this back-peddling and abject disavowal of responsibility for providing real democratic leadership is Article II, Section 3 of the Constitution which directs the President "from time to time to give to Congress information of the state of the union, and recommend to their consideration such legislation as he shall judge necessary and expedient." Secretary Anderson's statement is also counter to the Agricultural Appropriations Bill of 1945-6 which gave the B.A.E. explicit directions to conduct surveys and to make recommendations.

### ***Tarver Committee Punishes B.A.E. for Planning***

The Tarver Committee promptly went to work to punish the B.A.E. for its temerity. The Appropriations Act of 1946-7 provided, as in former years, that "no part of the funds herein appropriated or made available to the B.A.E. shall be used for state and county land-use planning, or for the maintenance of regional offices." The former function now belongs to the Extension Service, pursuant to the Farm Bureau's plan to break farm programs into 48 state units under its domination. The immediate result of the above prohibitions has been to lessen knowledge of intelligent land-use planning. The Tarver Committee in 1946 added insult to injury by explicitly prohibiting the B.A.E. from "conducting social surveys." The result will be to isolate two-thirds of the brains in the Department of Agriculture. B.A.E. may now collect statistics, but may not draw conclusions and make recommendations based thereon.

An explicit answer as to where the power now lies in forming agricultural policy was given by Secretary Anderson when he was questioned by the Tarver Committee regarding farm planning:

"I think we are going to have to have pretty united support from the farm groups before we can come before Congress with a program for any changes that are necessary." The American Farm

Bureau Federation has a group of economists at work. They are carefully studying the situation. . . . So I think there will be put before Congress proposals that arise from the farmers themselves, and those proposals I am sure Congress will consider carefully. . . . *The Department [of Agriculture] has been steadily suggesting to the farm groups the desirability of their taking the leadership and going in with their own programs, and we have had a fine response from them.* (Italics mine).

The delegation of the function of forming governmental policy to private interest groups is thus more candid, if not further developed, in agriculture than in industrial management or in labor. Undoubtedly, both Secretary Anderson and Judge Tarver would indignantly deny that the policy and attitude set forth in the above quotation approach a form of syndicalism, though with representation for the tenant, farm wage-worker and unorganized farm operator omitted.

### ***The Technique of Persecution***

The tragic lack of representation by pressure groups committed to aiding the rural poor has resulted in the slow deterioration of programs within the Department of Agriculture designed to aid those in rural slums, and in the passing of recent legislation oppressing them further. Even the C.I.O. and A.F. of L. have seldom raised their voices in protest; they have almost neglected the organization of farm workers. Consequently, farm wage-workers, in ever increasing numbers, are becoming economic zombies wandering on the borderline "between the desert and the sown," lacking security of land or job. Their sweat and blood and tears too often stain the food we eat and the fibre of the clothes we wear.

How are the forgotten men persecuted by Congress? The Department of Agriculture is today prohibited by Congress from setting any wage or hour standards for American farm workers. Yet by international agreement, aliens and prisoners of war working on farms are now protected, though that has not always been the case. Just after Pearl Harbor, Secretary of Agriculture Wickard, fearing an approaching food shortage,

directed the Farm Security Administration, which was best equipped by experience and policy, to recruit, train, transport and place farm labor where and when needed. Because it appeared that additional labor from Mexico and other countries would be needed, and because those nations agreed to cooperate with America only if their citizens coming here to work were assured certain minimum standards of wages, housing and other conditions, the F.S.A. and Wickard set up such standards *to be applied without discrimination to aliens and American citizens alike*. These standards were: a minimum wage of 30 cents an hour, 12 by 14 feet of living quarters for a family of four, clean drinking water and one privy for every 24 persons.

Big farm employers immediately objected, denouncing this farm labor program as an attempt to bring about "a social revolution in the midst of war." The uproar reached a climax in the spring of 1943 when Arizona growers of long staple cotton, urgently needed for parachutes, went on strike, refusing to employ cotton pickers under F.S.A. conditions.

Meantime, members of Congress, especially those on Tarver's Committee, became alarmed about the voluntary and eager movement of farm people from poor land areas in their native states to more hopeful areas such as northern dairy and sugar beet country. Hence, largely through the pressure of the Farm Bureau, Congress stripped the F.S.A. of its farm labor job. It was transferred to the new Office of Labor and the appropriation carried a prohibition against wage and labor standards, except for aliens. Moreover, Federal funds were not to be used to move farm or migrant labor from state to state, except upon instances of prior written approval by local county agents who were usually under the domination of the large growers and the Farm Bureau. In addition, the Tydings Amendment to the Selective Service Act, as applied by local draft boards, tended to tie farm laborers to their home localities, even to particular employers.



The freezing of available labor supply in areas of seasonal surplus and shortages had the obvious effect of increasing labor "shortages." It resulted in demands for more foreign workers, enemy prisoners of labor and even American Army troops to harvest the crops.\*

The following example also shows how the needy in agriculture are exploited. In the confusion following V-J Day, Americans overlooked the placing of wage *ceilings* of \$2.05 per hundred pounds for cotton pickers in Arkansas and Mississippi—ceilings set by state wage boards and enforceable by Federal statute. This was done at the request of the southern Farm Bureau while government controls of industrial wages were being relaxed and increases were being allowed under free collective bargaining. All protests against the ceilings were in vain. The strong had again triumphed over the weak.

### ***The Threat of Industrial Farming***

In the Twenties and early Thirties, when all American agriculture was depressed, the large operators, even the corporation farms, used the same popular slogans as the family-farm operators. Federal farm programs were *the thing*—Agriculture Adjustment Act payments, drought loans, feed loans, seed loans, even a Farm Security Administration program that was to rehabilitate on the land a million of the three million farm families needing help in money and in management know-how. In their common misery all farmers appeared to be one happy family, bent on common objectives. "When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be, but, when the devil was well, the devil a devil was he."

Today, the big operators have consolidated their organizational strength, forming coalitions among commodity and

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\*As late as the winter of 1946, growers were demanding 20,000 prisoners of war for the fruit and vegetable harvest on the Pacific coast, and the Office of Labor had an appropriation of \$14,000,000 for the 1946 crop year, most of it to be spent for the importation of an estimated 47,000 Mexican and other foreign nationals.

general farm groups, working out strategy paralleling that of big industry and finance. The small farm operators have either slackened their interest in organization or have adopted a "me, too" attitude, accepting the theory that the interest of the family-type farm operator is the same as that of a big corporation farm. Drugged by the radio and the press, a mass of American farmers blames "politicians," and seems either indifferent or hostile to any far-sighted program to strengthen family-type farming.

Behind these developments is this simple fact: the giant tractors of industrialized agriculture are menacing the family-sized farm. These tractors carry armor of political power as protection against the advance of the National Labor Relations Act, the Wage Hour Act, and the Social Security Act, and against the use of the Farm Security Administration program on a scale adequate to meet the needs of returning farm-bred veterans and farm wage workers and tenants aspiring to climb to land-ownership. Industrialized, mass production agriculture will fight every effort to break up big farms by purchase or re-sale to individual or cooperative farm operators. It will likewise fight efforts to provide small farmers with enough land and resources to make a decent living. Industrialized farming—operating with unique immunity an expanding rural sweatshop, using migrant labor at sub-standard wages and producing at lower unit costs—is our problem.

Against sweatshop competition and the economy of large scale purchase of supplies, production and marketing, the typical family-owned farm can stand up only *if supported by a national policy, strongly implemented*. Without this policy many will be driven off the land. If the coalition of reaction that is forming national policy today continues to legislate, appropriate, tax and administer the country, we face disaster.

Such disaster would invite revolution, more likely right than left. The Right Rev. Msgr. L. G. Ligutti, Secretary of the

National Catholic Rural Life Conference, has pointed out, in defending the F.S.A. against the charge of communism, that the component parts of a revolutionary situation are: (1) a landless rural proletariat, and (2) an unemployed and hungry urban proletariat. It was the F.S.A., as Father Ligutti showed, that had held within the orbit of democracy one million farm families who otherwise might have become recruits for communism or some grassroots version of fascism. Yet Congress has almost destroyed this democratizing agency. Even many of the families aided by this agency did not understand the nature of the forces which weakened it, and thus did not rise to the defense of the F.S.A. when it was being attacked by such publications as the *Farm Journal* and the *Farmer's Wife* (circulation 2,225,000; owner, Joseph N. Pew, arch-reactionary, millionaire oil man, Republican "angel," and his family).

It is likely that not more than two—Holman and Smith—of the Twelve perceive with any clarity the end toward which the present policy of favoring the industrialized farmer is leading America. Some refuse to look. Or, if they look, they refuse to believe. A few, perhaps, are fatalistic, determined to make the best of a transition to a native fascism that would administer an industrialized agriculture for the benefit of large individual and corporate land owners, yoked with industrial and financial interests in the cities, the final interlocking mechanism responsible to no one but small cliques of inside stockholders and managers. This "managerial revolution" in agriculture and its role in the control and manipulation of government and people have not been given adequate attention and study.

The brave exception is the La Follette Civil Liberties Committee study of the Associated Farmers of California, a study almost unnoticed when it was published during the war. After examining what was in effect a test run of American rural fascism financed from the cities, the committee con-



cluded with the significant warning that the same practices of exploitation, systematic terror and violence employed cooperatively by growers and public officials could be easily duplicated anywhere in America. It can happen here.

### ***Ways Out***

The pattern of salvation for family-type farming is indicated in this issue of *Social Action*, particularly in the first article. More genuine cooperatives are needed. To meet the competition of industrialized farming, family-type farmers must quickly develop cooperatives in every stage of the productive, packaging, distributing and marketing processes. In addition, city consumers need to know about the importance of family-type farming to them, as citizens and as producers of goods and services that farmers are willing to buy if they have the money. They must learn to purchase farm products produced, processed and marketed under fair conditions by cooperatives of family-type farmers. And likewise, of urgent importance, family-type farming needs to be relieved of the murderous sweatshop competition of an industrialized agriculture immune to all labor and social legislation.

Because family-type farming is a higher-cost operation and such operators are termed "marginal" in the economic sense, it is of equal importance that we insure a postwar economy of full consumption, full production and full employment. Family-type farming has a better chance of surviving during the period when its defenses are being prepared against the onslaught of big business farming if the market and prices for farm products remain at the present high levels. A sharp drop in employment, purchasing power and markets for farm products now or in the near future would tractor off the land millions of farm families before the program of salvation could be got under way.

### ***Salvation by Drift or Catastrophe***

How is this program of salvation to be brought to pass?

The lazy, escapist answer is to say, "Wait until the next depression; progress is not steady, it comes in waves, with intervening periods of stagnation or reaction."

Another easy answer is salvation by catastrophe. Those who subscribe to this method accept defeat for family-type farming. Projecting long-time trends, they say that the complete industrialization of American agriculture is overdue and inevitable, that the present farm population is destined to become wage-workers on the land of others, that millions are surplus and must move out of agriculture, that those who are left will be forced by exploitation to organize, to obtain extension of labor and social legislation and that, finally, when the full cycle of capitalism has been run, the urban and rural proletariat will arise, revolt and establish the "temporary" dictatorship of the combined proletariat. The Kulaks will be "liquidated" and the rest made "secure" on collective farms under the direction of "a wise and kindly commissar."

That classical revolutionary theory has been modified in practice by the development of two alternatives. In Italy, Hungary, Germany, Austria and Spain great land-owners, industrialists and financiers prolonged their rule by resort to the machinery of fascist terror and war. In Sweden, Uruguay, Switzerland and New Zealand, the middle way of democracy was used. By use of their governments, these people were able to maintain family-type farming and to realize tolerable standards of living and security.

There is little likelihood that American farm people will accept the revolutionary formula for salvation by catastrophe. They are bound to notice that it calls for them to be the victims in the experiment.

The real danger is that the lazy answer will be given—wait until the present boom is over, wait until the next depression. Unnoticed in this postponement is the very real possibility that next time there will be no New Deal, that next time the econ-

omy will drop and keep on dropping, until we have 19,000,000 unemployed. Then a man on a white horse or in a white tank will arrive, disperse the demonstrators with atomic bombs the size of aspirin tablets and set up a totalitarian regime in which the trains will run on time for twenty years, carrying persistent believers in democracy to concentration camps and death.

### *The Way is Steep*

Real salvation for family-type farming and for rural democracy is not easily or quickly won. As each step is taken, it must be defended against counter-attack while the next forward step is planned and made.

The first step is the hardest. That step is to generate among farmers themselves an awareness of the forces contending for mastery of American agriculture. On the one hand is the conventional pattern of the family farm—the unconquerable fortress of democracy, the cradle of all the other virtues we like to think of as characteristically American: gumption, git-up-and-git, root-hog-or-die. On the other hand is the factory-in-the-field. If the two are to exist together, fair competition between them must be established and enforced. The danger is that action will be too little and too late.

How are farm people to become aware of this conflict of forces in agriculture and to become so impressed with its meaning for them that they will do something about it while there is yet time? How are those farm organizations and leaders who see the issues clearly going to make enough farm people care enough soon enough?

The obstacles are many. The rural, small-town and farm press is, for the most part, steeped in the catch-words of the reactionary farm bloc and, in many instances, depends for advertising revenue upon farm implement, supply, marketing, utility, banking, and transportation corporations that make more profits out of farming farmers than farmers make in farming the nation's land. Radio supplies the same catch-words.



In recent years, the Farm Bureau has succeeded in transferring to the Extension Service more and more information and action programs, away from other agencies of the Department of Agriculture. The Department is today compelled to talk to farmers through an Extension Service dominated by a combination of highly conservative state governors, land grant colleges, and the Farm Bureau. The more progressive Federal bureaus, divisions and agencies are effectively censored, when not gagged. It is close to the exact truth to say that a gagged and blindfolded Department of Agriculture is about to lead a blinded and bemused farm population into the ditch of another farm depression from which millions will never recover.

All these obstacles and the indifference and antagonism of farm people to bold programs for the strengthening of family-type farming can and must be overcome. Democracy itself supplies the imperative. Democracy can also supply the means.

While it is true that, in the last analysis, farm people will be saved only if they want to be saved, non-farm individuals and organizations can help. One of the stock arguments of those who farm the farmers is that the rest of society is "ag'in" the farmer, that farmers, individually and in organizations, must act in their own defense "against" their enemies. The divide-and-rule tactic is obvious.

In 1942, organized labor, church and progressive farm groups joined to defend F.S.A. against a coalition bent on its dismemberment and destruction. The friends of F.S.A. not only saved it then; they won a role for F.S.A. and small farmers generally in the expansion of food production to meet war needs.

The same interest and practical aid are needed now. Labor, church and other progressive groups having farm and non-farm membership should take pains to acquaint their membership and the general public with the nature and the importance of the basic issues in agriculture. Thereby they will develop broader support for progressive measures and action by Congress and administrators. Equally important, they will demon-

strate to farm people the fact that continuance of family-type farming is a matter of national concern. They will demonstrate to farmers that they have friends who will act in their behalf. Family-type farmers and organizations proposing programs in their interest will take heart and grow in number and in effectiveness.

Such organizations as the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the National Consumers League, the Y.W.C.A., the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Friends of the Land have done much along this line. But the need is great and urgent. The churches have in recent years come to an understanding of the role of organized labor as a balance to the growing concentration of economic power in industry. As a result, church people have increasingly risen to defend and assist labor in wage disputes and strikes, notably in the U.A.W.-C.I.O. strike against General Motors Corporation. The same interest, understanding and support are needed in agriculture if family-type farming is to be saved.

Greater understanding and cooperation are the democratic answer all along the line, in international affairs, among labor, farm, church and other groups within the nation. Farmers already are further advanced in the practice of economic cooperation than any other social group, except the great industrial and financial trusts and cartels. But farmers too often limit their cooperative activities to the purchase of supplies and the sale of commodities, forgetting that true cooperation extends to a man in all his roles in society. Only recently have co-operatives begun to participate in the formulation and support of progressive legislative policies.

Meanwhile, another and greater "Grapes of Wrath" is in the making. We can prevent it if we will. Every individual citizen must make his decision. Failure to make a decision is in itself a decision—an acceptance of defeat and disaster for democracy. The challenge is inescapable. It is presented anew each day. That is the difficulty, and the priceless value, of democracy.

# The Church and Rural Justice

by DAVID S. BURGESS



—Townsend Godsey

Is the responsibility of religious leaders among the rural poor merely that of baptizing and burying them? Or does it include aid in organizing them into groups strong enough to demand a hearing in the halls where their economic and social fate is decided?

*Hear this, O ye that swallow up the needy, even to make the poor of the land to fail. (Amos 8:4) Woe to them that . . . covet fields, and take them by violence. (Micah 2:2) What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor. (Isaiah 3:15)*

Two passwords — *education* and *revolution* — should guide the church in its efforts to bring a measure of security to the millions of poor farmers, forgotten sharecroppers and helpless migrant laborers in America today. The church has already begun its educational task in rural America. It has sent out missionaries to establish schools, conduct institutes, plant



churches and bind up the wounds of the disadvantaged. Yet the officials of most church boards have tended to believe that the educational task was the only one which should concern the churches' representatives. This narrow-gauged emphasis is partially caused by their acceptance of the stock stereotype of the "country" in the minds of most urban Americans. The "country" is a place, according to the stereotype, of growing flowers, cozy farm houses, rugged individualism, rock-ribbed Republicanism in the North, and a combination of mint-julep bourbonism and laughing Negroes in the South. It is thought that "class consciousness" is a distinct rarity in rural areas. Is it any wonder that many Christians believe that a revolutionary, prophetic Gospel is inappropriate to the countryside, and that many enterprising young ministers, labor organizers and social workers regard rural location as "unstrategic"?

The facts about rural poverty and its political repercussions, presented so convincingly by Arthur Raper and Paul Sifton, should have proved already the falsity of the "country" stereotype and shown us the urgent need for *revolution*—for a prophetic message and program to lead the rural poor out of their land of bondage. From these facts the following major conclusions can be drawn:

### ***Class Lines Harden in Agriculture***

1. *As the increased mechanization of agriculture is making farming more of a practical business enterprise than a "way of life", class lines are becoming more distinct in agriculture.* At the top is the large commercial farmer. He is secure, well-organized with men of his rank, and often represented in Washington by men agreeing substantially with the national policies of the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers.\* On the next rung is the small independent

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\*The most illuminating example of the growth of class consciousness among the "business" farmers and their close allegiance, at least in national legislative policy, with big business, is found in the history and present practices of the Farm Bureau Federation. An important distinction must be made, however, between the Farm Bureau organizations in the Northeast, especially in New Eng-

farmer, often eager to move up, but constantly fearful of descending the ladder. He is engaged in a losing battle with the big farmer and the semi-monopolistic corporations selling farm machinery, oil, fertilizer, electric power and the like. Below him are the tenant and the sharecropper, and at the bottom of the ladder is the "wage hand" who is often the migrant wandering from crop to crop. In most areas, the top rung—the business farmer—sets the wage policies, farm prices and practices for all those beneath him, and the members of each class exploit the classes beneath them.

### ***Violent Disruptions Anticipated***

2. *There will be violent disruptions in rural areas in the near future.* Increased mechanization in rural areas will drive men to the cities; and unemployment in the cities will drive men to the country where there will be fewer jobs. This gloomy forecast should lead us to re-examine the history of agricultural uprisings of the past. The seeds of revolution, as in the days of Amos, have often come from seemingly peaceful countryside where men sometimes could see more clearly than in the cities the need for immediate change. Study of the rise of the Industrial Workers of the World, the Greencorn Rebellion in Oklahoma, the Farmers' Holiday Movement, the formation of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union some twelve years ago in the sloughs and plantations of darkest Arkansas, the violent

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land, Pennsylvania and Ohio, and the state Farm Bureau organizations in the South and even in certain sections of the Middle West. The national policy of this organization has usually been controlled by the latter group, and this is our chief concern. Some of the chief reasons for the organization's present strength in Washington are as follows: 1) large grants of money from the Chicago Board of Trade and the Lackawanna Railroad for its beginning; 2) illegal arrangements whereby Extension Service employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture often solicit membership for the Bureau and the Bureau is thereby mistaken for a government agency by the uninitiated; 3) forced membership for hundreds of Negroes in the rural South who have no vote or voice in the organization; 4) huge subsidies for the Bureau's programs from business groups. The Bureau in the capital has opposed special taxes for chain stores and all appropriations for the Farm Security Administration. It has supported fabulous ship subsidies for the Merchant Marine, as well as much anti-labor legislation. In essence the Bureau agrees with the Chamber of Commerce and the N.A.M. in national policy.

agricultural strikes in California during the 1930's, the Share-the-Wealth program of Huey Long who despite his corruption broke the control of aristocratic families of Louisiana especially in the rural areas. These uprisings may foreshadow the pattern of some future movement. The history of the Populist Movement, especially in the South, reveals fires of resentment against "big business" and "big farmers", which still smolder in the hearts of small farmers and day laborers. With another depression, these latent grievances may break forth into fire and sweep the countryside.

### ***No Party or Government Agency Has Adequate Program***

3. *No political party or government agency of our day has developed an adequate social philosophy or the practical means to implement this philosophy which will rally the rural poor.* These people, it now appears, face a planless chaos. Parties of the Left, concerned largely with urban problems, seem to offer no way out; neither do the two major parties.

Government agencies have done little better. For example, because of the necessity for diversification of crops and the certainty of increased mechanization in southern agriculture, the Department of Agriculture recently presented a tentative plan entitled "A Conversion Program for the Cotton South." It states, "a truly effective program . . . could release for employment (in other than agriculture) about a million and a half owner-operators, tenants, sharecroppers and laborers now in agriculture." Along with this recommendation, however, little mention is made of the effects of such a program on the persons displaced by it, or of what should be done for them between their displacement in agriculture and their promised reintegration into new industries which the report assumes will be started in the South within this coming decade. The report religiously avoids any mention of the question of land control, or of the distribution of political and economic power which will spell eventual success or failure of any program as measured by its effects upon the national econ-



omy. At a time when some leading southern planters are predicting that the only salvation for the soon-to-be-displaced farm worker is public relief, it is hoped that the Department might come forth with a more adequate and constructive program for the most needy section of American agriculture.

Amidst such pressing problems the Protestant churches, who almost alone minister to the religious needs of rural America, do not, as yet, seem to have discovered within their ethic an adequate yardstick for judging our agricultural crisis. Church bodies have made forceful statements about the necessity to conserve the soil, to strengthen rural churches, to do away with the abuse of landlords and monopolistic corporations, to have better rural health, education, home life, crop control and the like. But such statements of purpose should be made within the framework of a political-economic philosophy that sees clearly the realities of our contemporary society and is grounded in a prophetic Christian faith with a distinct view of the role which God and the church play in history. I will venture to set forth here in brief the tenets of my own faith for whatever they may contribute toward such a philosophy.

### *Tenets of a Prophetic Social Ethic*

The primary function of the church is, I believe, to bring men closer to God and thereby, in a secondary way, closer to one another in love and fellowship. In this world of sinful men, a wealthy man, partly because of his riches, finds it difficult to enter into true fellowship with his poorer brothers. His customs, his home, his church, his view of God and the world are fundamentally different. Likewise, a poor man, burdened with the day to day struggle for bread, finds it difficult to approach his more privileged brother as an equal before men or even before his Lord. In essence, great economic inequality blocks men from true fellowship with one another, and with their Maker. To remove this "middle wall of partition," the church, through its means of inspiration and instruc-

tion, should aid men voluntarily to seek a greater equality in their economic and cultural life.

Since the Gospel is for all men irrespective of class, certain of the clergy are called to serve primarily the more fortunate. Other clergy are called to aid the poor by laboring in the more depressed areas of the country. The men serving the poor have a further duty beyond inspiration and instruction. *For the state of approximate equality necessary for true fellowship in the church and society will never be approached unless, among other factors, certain Christian workers are willing and able to form themselves into a well disciplined group bent upon using all means at their disposal and in keeping with their faith to advance the cause of the lower classes to the end that political and economic power is better distributed in society and the glaring inequalities between classes (and races) are eradicated.* I do not say that the church as the church, with its many members of divergent viewpoints, should ever constitute itself a definite pressure group on all social issues. But I do say that a group within the church must perform this pressure function for the church and for the good of all.

### ***The Power Problem in Agriculture***

The above conviction is based upon my belief that fundamental changes for the better in society come *when* and *if* the down-trodden seek independence rather than submissiveness, responsibility rather than slavery. Observe the recent rise of the labor movement in America which despite its occasional excesses has probably done more to raise the economic and spiritual level of the American masses than any other movement thus far in the Twentieth Century. Such changes for the better in society are partially wrought by God working through the hearts of the common people and through leaders who struggle not for their own advancement but for the welfare of the lowly. Usually, though not always, these changes revolve around a shift in the balance of political or economic power in a society. The nub of this power problem in relation to agriculture is well

summarized by Carey McWilliams in his book, *Ill Fares the Land*:

Some groups in agriculture have too much power. . . . Until this power is broken, controlled or counterbalanced in some manner, the basic cause of the present-day paradox of scarcity in the midst of abundance, of technical advance making for riches to one group and poverty for another, of expanding agricultural production and increasing rural retrogression, cannot be squarely met. For the inequality in the economic field is reflected in the political field. . . . Until the masses of people actually get possession of the reins of power, both economically and politically, they will not be able to create a democratic non-exploitive economic power.\*

Hence, not remaining neutral, aiding the common people to get this power, and training them to use it intelligently are some of the functions of churchmen who have chosen to labor with the lower classes. This means specifically that a churchman should relate himself to those organizations aiding the underprivileged, such as labor unions, cooperatives, and the like. To others agreeing with me on these fundamental tenets, this function may mean to join some party of the Left, but as yet I have not been able to discover a party with an acceptable program for the rural masses.

### ***Guides for Immediate Action***

Any general view of the church and its function in society is not realistic unless certain specific guides for immediate action are drawn from it. The following "guides for action" result for me from the above philosophy when I face the problem of human degradation in rural slums:

1. *The condition of a few individuals or corporations owning huge tracts of lands while hundreds of God's children are landless and jobless hinders society from drawing nearer to the Christian way.* The statement, "Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely," seemed ever more true to me after visiting large southern cotton plantations where the wages, the schools, the churches, and the whole community are controlled

\*New York: Little, Brown and Co., 1943, p. 389.



by one man or by a northern corporation. The democratization of land control can be advanced by heightened tax rates on farms owned by absentee landlords, lowered rates when the owner is the actual operator, and restrictions on the amount of land any one man or corporation can own.

### ***Collective Bargaining and Cooperative Farms***

2. *The right of free collective bargaining, a reality today to a great number of industrial workers, must be made a reality by law in rural areas, especially with the increasing importance of the factory farms.* Such a right will not be established by law unless the major national labor organizations reverse their present position of virtually ignoring the needs of rural laborers, organize them, and thereby strengthen the power of the rural poor at the polls.

3. *Assuming that a small farmer, tenant or day laborer wants to stay in the competitive agricultural market, the establishment of cooperative and collective farms is among the few means by which these "little" men can rival the big producers.* We must struggle to aid the small independent farmer to hold his land, but realize at the same time that in many instances we are fighting a losing battle. The increased mechanization of agriculture and the monopolistic control of land make the homestead, subsistence farm philosophy, in many cases, "an economic anachronism foredoomed to failure."\* Undue romanticism about the family-sized farm on the part of church officials, Farm Bureau leaders, and others clouds the facts. In the words of one farm expert, Dr. Carter Goodrich, "the chances of the small farmer seem about equal to the chances of the handloom in 1800." Therefore, we must attempt to develop cooperative means as the realistic way of the future.†

### ***A Government Program for the Small Farmer***

4. *The steady introduction of collective bargaining and co-*

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\**President's Report on Farm Tenancy*, National Resources Committee, 1937, p. 22.

†*Revolution on the Land*, p. 47; cf. McWilliams, p. 370.

perative methods in agriculture will scarcely be possible without the establishment of a more extensive government program formulated primarily in the interests of the small farmer, tenant, sharecropper and day laborer. Two steps must be taken. First, a separate government department must be set up to aid these lower agricultural classes. As Preacher Blackstone of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union has so clearly said, the Department of Agriculture "will not be able in the near future to remove itself from the domination of the rich and powerful landowning class of farmers and their political pressure lobby."\* Industrial workers have the Department of Labor to aid them; and industrial employers have the Department of Commerce. The same difference in class interest should be likewise recognized in agriculture by the creation of a new department.

The second requirement is that the Federal Government should exercise its power of eminent domain by seizing large tracts of rich land not only for reforestation and grazing purposes, but in order that small farmers, tenants and others could be rehabilitated on land which they could operate productively in a cooperative way. Such a plan may not be congenial to some American folkways, but it is a necessity if thousands of families in agriculture are to have a secure future. As a temporary expedient, the Farm Security Administration, originally established to aid the lower classes in agriculture, should remove from its national and local ranks administrators not committed to carrying out the original purpose of the agency, and competent men so committed should be appointed in their stead.

The agency has been emasculated during the last few years, the rehabilitation program liquidated, the lending program curtailed, and many of the more progressive functions of the agency transferred to more conservative sections of the Department of Agriculture. Behind these actions were usually the large commercial farmers who resented the fact that the re-

\**President's Report on Farm Tenancy*, National Resources Committee, 1937, p. 21.

habilitation projects made the residents economically more independent, that the migratory camps gave improved housing to the Joads, and that the loaning program gave a new start in life on a family-size farm to some former wage hand of theirs. They knew that if these projects, these camps, these loaning facilities were continued, the "little" man would become stronger and more independent.

Personally, I favor the original purpose of the F.S.A. for religious reasons. I have read the story of how five hundred families were rehabilitated by the F.S.A. so that they had better food, farm management, land use, live stock, housing and health. But above all, they were given a greater sense of self respect and hope for the future.\* The weak were given a new lease on life not by a debilitating dole, but by small grants, sound advice, and basic understanding on the part of F.S.A. agents. I have visited F.S.A. rehabilitation projects and have seen the self-government and the self-reliance of the people, which stand in striking contrast to their crushed lives in the past.

Such are the "guides for action" for some who are working with the poor of the land. These guides are in no wise a substitute for the Christian faith which can empower men to serve beyond their natural abilities. This faith is again calling men to the countryside to spread the Gospel of love, hope, and justice. To those Christians who labor in the small hamlets, the migrant shantytowns, and the backwoods of America, God is in the struggle for justice. He does not assure a victory to those who fight His battle, but He gives them power to bring a richer life to hundreds of His children.

### *Ways the Churches May Aid the Rural Poor*

American churches differ. Individual Christians differ in their abilities. Hence the following list of ways in which churches and their representatives may aid those at the bottom rungs of

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\*Conrad Taeuber and Rachel Rowe, *Five Hundred Families Rehabilitate Themselves*.

the agricultural ladder is not meant to represent a comprehensive program for any one church or individual. It is simply a list of alternative suggestions:

1. *The rural church must be strengthened.* More leadership is needed than aspiring theological trainees and clergymen who have elsewhere seen their best days. The church needs men trained in specialized tasks of the ministry, men who feel that the countryside offers a suitable setting to spread and apply the Christian Gospel. The Home Missions Council of North America has held many a noteworthy institute in which its representatives helped to train the untutored rural clergy. But the subject matter of these institutes and similar denominational ventures dealt almost exclusively with the "growth" aspect of country life, and with little reference to the "conflict" questions of race, class and status. One of the most interesting attempts to train the rural clergy as well as storefront preachers of the city in answering the "conflict" questions of our day has been made by the Rev. Claude Williams, head of the Peoples' Institute of Applied Religion with present headquarters in Detroit. Though many may disagree with his political views, he is probably one of the few Christian leaders of America who has made the Bible relevant to the agricultural questions of the Twentieth Century.

2. *Churches should send representatives to live and work with sharecroppers, migrants and low income farmers at their level,* to fight for their rights, to train lay preachers, to preach the Word and administer the sacraments, to build up the community life of the workers, and with Christian perspective to criticize workers and employers alike. Not only must these churchmen ameliorate present sufferings; they must hold the vision of the better society and struggle for it by aiding the common people to have more political and economic power.

3. *Churches should establish and maintain cooperative farming communities,* not as a means of escape for those who wish to flee the cares of this life, but as an implicit judgment against the present agricultural system and as an example of what can



be done by a group of religiously motivated individuals living together. In reviewing the long list of failures of cooperative communities in America, even the most hardboiled sociologist admits that the enterprises which lasted the longest were those in which a majority of the participants were motivated principally by the Gospel message of brotherhood rather than by the drive of their own enlightened self interest.\* This the churches should note. There is a danger, however, in such programs. The residents of any newly established community tend to live unto themselves. This leads inevitably to the weakening of the community, for unless members of cooperative communities participate in the political life of the nation by joining forces with similar ventures and with national movements sympathetic with their way of life, "big business," the "big farmer," or possibly Congress itself may put an end to such revolutionary enterprises.

4. *Churches must be prepared to send ministers to work in government resettlement communities.* This recommendation is based on the optimistic assumption that following a depression, the Federal Government at the direction of Congress will undertake some type of huge resettlement program. So far there has been a scarcity of trained ministers who understood the intricacy of government procedure and were able to work in such communities on a strictly interdenominational basis, even though the Home Missions Council of North America has made some important progress in its "comity" plans for interdenominational cooperation. Some ministers have split government communities along sectarian lines, and consequently some government officials have been reluctant to cooperate with church agencies.

5. *Instead of discouraging young aspirants from taking a job in the government "bureaucracy," church leaders should encourage them to enter government service as a religious*

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\*One of the best studies of such a community was made by Dr. James Dombrowski concerning the Christian Commonwealth Community of Georgia. See Chapter 12, *Early Days of Christian Socialism in America*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1936.

calling. This is especially applicable to agriculture where well-trained and religiously motivated administrators sympathetic with the needs of the underprivileged have been most scarce.

6. Finally, the Protestant churches in America should maintain a single legislative bureau in Washington. Thereby the views of churchmen acting through their denominational and international organizations can be made known. On many issues of the day the church is split, but on several crucial issues affecting the welfare of the rural poor, members have, it appears, been united.

Our Lord has said, "The well have no need of a physician." The agricultural disinherited stand more in the need of the church's aid than perhaps any other group in America. Will we put first the service of those who need us first?

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## Guide to Rural Organizations

EDITOR'S NOTE: This guide has been prepared from an extensive study by Rev. Robert B. Sanford of literature distributed by farm pressure groups, and of analyses of their power by such authorities as Donald C. Blaisdell (*Economic Power and Political Pressures, Temporary National Economic Committee Monograph No. 26, 76th Congress, 1941*) and Wesley McCune (*The Farm Bloc, 1943*).

### GENERAL FARM ORGANIZATIONS

*Farmers Educational and Cooperative Union of America* (National Farmers Union)—The only major farm organization which cooperates closely with labor unions. In 1943 the NFU joined forces with the CIO, the AF of L, the Federal Council of Churches, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, and the Ohio Farm Bureau to save the Farm Security Administration from virtual destruction in Congress. NFU has supported most New Deal and liberal farm legislation. It also supports a Missouri Valley Authority, permanent FEPC, OPA, and national health legislation. The NFU believes in aid to small farmers and a high level of farm production. It does not stress the need for higher farm prices.

NFU is one of the strongest proponents of both consumer and producer cooperatives for farmers. NFU co-ops have assets of over \$100,000,000 in 26 states. The NFU also has a youth program which is one of the nation's best. President—James G. Patton, 3501 East 46th St., Denver 16, Colo. Publication—*National Union Farmer*, semi-monthly, 50c. a year. The Washington office, 300 B St., S.E., publishes a *Newsletter*, free.

*American Farm Bureau Federation*—Has the most influential farm lobby in

Washington. AFBF joined forces in 1943 with the Grange, National Association of Manufacturers, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, American Bankers Association, and other groups to curtail the FSA program in Congress. In recent years AFBF has favored AAA and TVA. It favors legislative curbs on labor, restrictions on production to drive prices up, opposes FSA, FEPC, and MVA. The AFBF takes a "business" attitude toward agriculture. It believes that the two-thirds of U.S. farmers who produce only one-fifth of the crops should not be encouraged by government aid to remain in production. The semi-official tie-up of the Farm Bureau with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Service in many states gives it tremendous influence. The state organizations in Ohio, Vermont, and some other states are more liberal than the national leadership. President—Edward A. O'Neal, 58 East Washington St., Chicago, Ill. Publication—*Nation's Agriculture*, monthly, 50c. a year.

*The National Grange*—An historic farmers' organization, which was strongly militant in the nineteenth century, but has become conservative. It is secret and ritualistic in organization. The local Granges are often valuable as social centers in small communities. The national organization has consistently opposed most New Deal and liberal farm policies. It usually sides with the Farm Bureau. President—Albert A. Goss, 744 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C. Publication—*National Grange Monthly*, 50c. a year, Springfield, Mass.

## U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AGENCIES

*Farm Security Administration*—Although drastically reduced by conservatives in Congress in 1943 and still under fire, the FSA is the most important federal agency working to aid small farmers. It has loaned over \$800,000,000 to tenants, sharecroppers, and small land owners. More than half these loans have come due and they have been repaid 90 per cent. FSA has helped its one million borrowers to raise their annual family income an average of 35 per cent.

*Agricultural Extension Service*—The service operates through the State Agricultural Colleges, provides educational material to the public and administers the local county program, which includes:

*The County Agent*—one of the farmer's best friends in most counties, and a man who will often cooperate with the church more fully than he has been asked to do.

*The Home Demonstration Agent*—One of the rural woman's best advisors.

*4-H Clubs*—One of the best youth programs for rural youth.

*Rural Electrification Administration*—Gives financial backing to cooperative power districts organized by *local initiative* in areas not served by private companies. Its 812 cooperatives organized since 1935 have brought electricity to over 1,100,000 rural homes. Today about 42 per cent of American farms are electrified as against 11 per cent in 1935.

*Soil Conservation Service*—Provides aid to local soil conservation districts organized cooperatively under *local leadership*. In 1944, over 2,600,000 farms were being protected under this program.

## CHURCH AGENCIES

*Town and Country Church Committee*—A joint committee of the Federal Council of Churches, the Home Missions Council of North America, the International Council of Religious Education. It is a coordinating and publicity agency composed largely of denominational rural work leaders. Executive Secretary—Benson Y. Landis, 297 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y. Publication—*Town and Country Church*, \$1. per year (nine issues), very useful to the rural minister.



*Denominational Town and Country Work Committees*—All the major denominations have good leadership in this field, which rural leaders may call upon with confidence. (See the *Yearbook of American Churches*, 1945, Benson Y. Landis (ed.), Federal Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y., \$3.)

*Home Missions Council of North America*—An interdenominational agency working in seven significant areas of home missions activity, including Indians, migrants, institutes for ministers to sharecroppers. The work with migrants has brought to 600,000 migrants in 23 states Christian leadership concerned for their immediate welfare. Its program is largely on an ameliorative level in an effort to strike a balance between denominations with varying views as to the social role of the church. Executive Secretaries—Mark A. Dawber and Edith E. Lowry, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

*Christian Rural Fellowship*—Devoted to awakening a realization of the strategic values and needs of rural work among ministers and community leaders and to coordinating the denominational Christian Rural Fellowships. Executive Secretary—John H. Reisner, 156 Fifth Ave., New York 10, N. Y. Publication—*Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin*, monthly, \$1. a year.

*Agricultural Missions, Inc.*—Operates from the same office as the Christian Rural Fellowship, and directs its work toward foreign missions. Publication—*Agricultural Mission Notes* (included with *Christian Rural Fellowship Bulletin*).

*Fellowship of Southern Churchmen*—An organization of liberal ministers in the South. Executive Officers—T. B. Cowan, Norris, Tenn., and Nelle Morton, Box 577, Chapel Hill, N. C. Publication—*Prophetic Religion*, quarterly, \$1. a year.

*National Catholic Rural Life Conference*—Executive Secretary—Msgr. Luigi Ligutti, 3801 Grand Ave., Des Moines 12, Iowa. Publication—*Land and Home*, monthly, \$2. a year.

*Jewish Agricultural Society*—Managing Director—Gabriel Davidson, 386 Fourth Ave., New York 16, N. Y.

## RURAL LABOR UNIONS

*National Farm Labor Union* (formerly *Southern Tenant Farmers Union*)—President—H. L. Mitchell, Box 443, Memphis, Tenn. Publication—*The Farm Worker*, 25 cents. Twenty-seven thousand membership among tenant farmers, sharecroppers and day laborers of the South. Organized seasonal migrations with A.F.L. meat and cannery workers in the East. Working closely with C.I.O. and A.F.L. on issues of the South.

*Food, Tobacco and Allied Workers Union—C.I.O.*—President, Donald Henderson, Philadelphia, Penna. Membership chiefly in canneries, tobacco sheds. Few agricultural field workers except in far West. Recently has concentrated upon agricultural processing.

*United Dairy Farmers*—District #50, U.M.W.-A.F.L., 901 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.

## EDUCATIONAL AGENCIES

*American Country Life Association*—Includes top-ranking leaders of American rural life agencies. Facilitates exchange of ideas and improvement of American rural life. President—David E. Lindstrom, 300a New Agriculture Bldg., Urbana, Ill. *Youth Section*: Executive Secretary—E. L. Kirkpatrick, 734 Jackson Place, Washington, D.C. Publication—*Rural Youth News*, quarterly.

(Continued at Bottom of Back Cover)



## Social Scene

It should be clear that farm security depends on the general prosperity of the country. In this respect the interests of farm and labor are not competitive but coordinate. Unfortunately "country hayseeds" and "city slickers" have been suspicious of each other for a long time. Such suspicions have not been allayed by commercial practices and political interests that profit by division. One of the genuine needs of contemporary society is a coalition of farm-labor action.

An interesting approach to such understanding is fostered on the campus of the University of Wisconsin. For more than twenty years the Rural Sociology Department of the Agriculture College has conducted a Town-Country Leadership Summer School, bringing together religious workers in rural areas from all over the country. For the last four years the School for Workers in Industry has sponsored a simultaneous Industrial Relations Institute for Church Leaders in industrial parishes. These two conferences now hold joint sessions in which, reflected in their respective members, the clash of viewpoint between rural and urban fields is aired, and common ground is sought. Through such discussion and fellowship, beside the beautiful lakes of Madison, it is hoped to bring farm and labor closer together.\* The security of either is affected by the prosperity of both.

Alfred W. Swan

\*In 1946 these conferences will be held July 8 to 19. For information write: Prof. J. H. Kolb, Town-Country Leadership Summer School, Suffern, N. Y. Publication—*The Decentralist*, \$1. a year. or Prof. E. E. Schwartztrauber, School for Workers, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wis.

### Guide to Rural Organizations (Continued)

*School of Living*—A demonstration and education center for "homestead" and decentralist principles. Founder—Ralph Borsodi. Director—Elizabeth Nutting, Suffern, N. Y. Publication—*The Decentralist*, \$1. a year.

*Community Service, Inc.*—Promotes the development of sound rural community life. President—Arthur E. Morgan, Yellow Springs, Ohio. Publication—*Community Service News*, bi-monthly, \$1.25 a year; also a valuable pamphlet called, *Directory of National Organizations of Service to Community Leaders*, 50c., 1943.

*Southern Rural Life Council*—Sponsored by Peabody College, Scarritt College, Vanderbilt University, and Fisk University. Director—John E. Brewton, Peabody College, Nashville 4, Tenn. Published *Agencies Concerned with the Quality of Rural Life in the South*, a Directory, 1944, 99 pp. 25c.

ROBERT B. SANFORD